

Sen. Reid's Manager's Amendment Solidifies Requirements that Federal Funds Pay for Abortions

The Manager's Amendment introduced by Sen. Reid does not in any way resolve the concerns previously articulated by Sen. Nelson, Rep. Stupak, and pro-life Americans have raised regarding the federal funding of abortions. In fact, the "compromise" language included in the manager's amendment would be even worse than the so-called "compromise" put forward by Sen. Casey earlier this week. This abortion language *ensures* that—for the first time—federal funds will be used to pay for elective abortions.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops is opposed to this language, and with its inclusion they will officially oppose the passage of this health care legislation.

The manager's amendment is nothing more than elaborate structure to circumvent and violate the clear intent of the Hyde, Stupak, and Nelson amendments: that no federal funds will support health plans that include elective abortions.

There is no prohibition on abortion coverage in federally-subsidized health care exchanges. Unlike the language in the original Nelson/Hatch amendment, or the Stupak amendment in the House, the manager's amendment does not prevent federal funds from paying for abortion in the federally-subsidized health care exchanges.

The state "opt-out" still requires each state's tax dollars to pay for elective abortions. A state may prohibit abortion coverage in its exchange, but the underlying bill *already allowed a state to do so*. This provision does nothing to prevent one state's tax dollars from paying for abortions in other states. States can opt-out of providing insurance coverage of abortions, but cannot opt-out of paying for abortions. The manager's amendment ensures that Nebraska taxpayers will be paying for abortions in California.

The new "public option" managed by the Office of Personnel and Management (OPM) will cover abortions. Each state through OPM can provide two multi-state plans and only one of them will exclude abortions. OPM's current health care program—the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) does not include any plans that cover elective abortion. For the first time, a federally funded and managed health care plan will cover elective abortions.

The manager's amendment includes the reauthorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, without Hyde Amendment language to prevent federal funding of abortions. Last Congress, the Senate passed a reauthorization of Indian Health Service (IHS) and included pro-life protections—supported by Sen. Nelson—to ensure that no federal IHS funds can be used to pay for abortions. This amendment fails to codify restrictions to prevent federal funding of abortions within Indian health.

The manager's amendment rejects other "compromise" proposals on abortion. Other "compromise" proposals put forward would have codified the House-approved "Weldon Amendment" which prohibits government bodies from discriminating against health care providers. These compromises also included an "individual" opt-out from abortion coverage, which the manager's amendment does not. The manager's amendment rejects even the most broadly accepted agreements on this issue.